

The Heist-est Heist Ever Heisted: A Heist Story of a Heist

Special Editor's Edition

by Peter Derk

Made possible by the generous(ish) donations of:

Cassie
Jen
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EDITOR'S NOTE:

This edition of The Heistest Heist Ever Heisted is the newly revised, up-to-date edition. If you're reading an edition other than this edition, it's missing key elements and editing notes that provide clarity and necessary un-stupid-ness. But if you're reading another edition, you wouldn't be able to read this note anyway. So maybe this is all worthless.

Damn it.

Well, let's get on with it, then.

The first key to being part of a heist is to show that you've got a special skill. There are guys who can sit on top of elevators and make them all fucked up, and there are guys who make disguises. There's usually someone like a girl who is really good with knives and is also kind of terrifying. But whatever the skill is, you need SOMETHING. My special skill? Well, that story begins with telling you about how I spent a lot of years barfing on money.

I can play my body like a fiddle. Like someone who is good at fiddle can play a fiddle, anyway. I'm no good at fiddle, so I can play my body like someone who is good at fiddle can play a fiddle, not like how I can play a fiddle. This got really complicated. Let me simplify:

I can barf on command. Shit. Belch. Whatever. I can do other stuff too, like cry, but that's never got me out of a speeding ticket. Whenever I've tried, instead of getting me out of the ticket, it gets me into a worse ticket because the cop is so disgusted. Then I go to court, cry again, and pretty soon I'm in an orange jumpsuit and crying for real, which is not a great power move in prison.

I know what you're thinking. Being able to barf whenever you want doesn't sound too useful. But trust me, if there's one thing I learned from a bunch of smut I've seen with this lady who built an empire off pictures of her giant butt online, any gift is useful. You just need the right application.

Step one in my regular process is get an invite to a poker game.

My tactic is to sit at a bar with a *Poker For Fuck-Ups* book next to me, and I look at a page, put the book down, shuffle a deck of cards so they all explode up in the air. Then I gather up the cards and look in the book again, like I'm trying to figure out what went wrong, and then I shuffle again and explode the cards even worse than the first time.

Meanwhile, I have two fat wallets poking out of the back of my pants, and when I buy my drinks, I pull out a wad of bills separate from the two wallets. And while I pick up the cards I exploded, bills fall out of my pockets and the collar of my shirt and my ear (this is a variation of a trick I learned from my fun uncle or “funcele,” not to be confused with a “fuckle.” That’s a different uncle who you might also get money from, but he doesn’t just give it to you. You earn it. With silence).

I know my act seems pretty obvious. Some people will tell you “Don’t hit me over the head with it,” but I’ll tell you right now, when people say that, they’re not thinking that what you’ll hit them over the head with is a wallet full of money that you seem to have no control over. You really need them to get the point. And the point is that you suck a poker, you have a wallet, and inside that wallet there’s money.

Last week I was at a poker game I got invited to based on my exploding card trick.

One of my biggest problems is I genuinely don’t know how to play poker. At all. You’d think I’d have picked some of it up by now, but I’m pretty thick that way. Plus, I’m usually focused on the food and drinks at poker parties. Like at this party last week, there was a party sub. And if you don’t know the difference between a sub and a party sub, the difference is a party sub is gigantic. That’s what makes a sandwich into a party: gigantism. It’s the same principle as drinking. What’s the difference between drinking and partying? Quantity.

Anyway, I’m eating a lot of party sub because it’s pretty good, and I just keep folding. Every time I’m supposed to bet or call or whatever, I say, “Fold,” around a mouthful of sandwich and set my cards down on the table. Because one of the keys to eating a lot of sub is to have your hands empty of cards most of the time. The more time there’s no cards in your hands, the

more time you can have sandwich in your hands, which is one step closer to having that sandwich inside your face.

The leader of the group, Hank, is the one who picked me up at a bar while I was doing my explode the cards routine. He invited me over to his garage, where we're all sitting around this fancy poker table he built, which then he had to put in the garage because it was destroying his marriage to have a poker table and a bunch of guys smoking cigars inside the house.

I know a lot of the keys to things, and the key to a good marriage is to take whatever you love the most in life, whatever brings you joy, and be willing to relocate it to the garage and use it only once every few months when you've built up enough relationship capital to have a big fight with your wife because you wanted to experience one shred of joy, which involved picking up a stranger at a bar, getting annihilated, spending hundreds of dollars on sandwiches, and staying up until 3 AM playing poker.

I'm not married, but trust me. I'm a good observer. If you're thinking about getting married, make sure you have a garage and that you're willing to put everything you love out there and mostly forget it.

Anyway, the other guys are getting suspicious because I keep folding, but it's cool because they keep collecting my "aunty," whatever the hell that means, and I'm doing a good job of talking through mouthfuls of party sub and saying stuff like, "Gee whiz, of all the rotten luck," and other stuff Charlie Brown would probably say if he tried to play poker because he'd always lose.

Did Charlie Brown have leukemia? Is that why he was bald and with no eyebrows? I guess the good thing when your kid has leukemia is that you can get them a Snoopy and be pretty sure the dog will outlive the kid, so you won't have to talk to your kid through a dog death.

Hey, it's not a huge ray of sunshine, but I'm talking about childhood cancers here. What's a better silver lining? If you've got one, I'd love to hear it.

Anyway, after a couple hours and a couple feet of party sub, it's time to make my move.

There's money out all over the table, and I take a moment to center myself. It's a tough puke this time. I'm very full, but it's all bread and meat and stuff. I should probably drink smoothies or something at these things, but you'd be surprised how little these guys seem to care about their health. They're just always eating smoked meats and cheeses and stuff. Not a lot of probiotics or leafy greens. I don't know if they've even seen a goji berry.

If I think of something really gross, that usually gets me going. Someone told me once that if you're having sex and want to slow it down, imagine you're having sex with your grandma on a huge pile of garbage. That was pretty gross, but when I tried that one it backfired and I finished really fast. I don't know why. Maybe it's a testament to the abilities of the person I slept with that time. Or maybe my brain double-crossed me and made me finish fast so I could stop torturing it with these grandma/garbage images. The one other possibility I don't like thinking about, my grandma was a good-looking woman. I'm just going to throw it out there and never mention it again. But whatever the reason, it weirded me out, and I never really came back from it.

If all else fails when I'm working up a puke, I squeeze my balls a little. That's pretty nauseating.

Hank is like, "Hey, man. Are you playing or what?"

"Just a second," I say.

I say, "I think that sandwich might have something funny in it."

Or, at least that's what I start to say before puke rockets out of my mouth and covers the table, the cards, most of the other players, and best of all, the money.

The part of puking you never get used to is when you have to wait to take a breath. Puke takes forever to finish up so you can breathe in again. My eyeballs go tight in the sockets, and I wonder if they'll shoot out someday. That would be cool if I could do that, but this is real life, not Beetlejuice world.

After the puke, there's usually at least one person who leaves right away. Like leaves the entire house. There's usually another person who vomits or almost vomits himself and can't stay in the room. There's always one or two people who stay in the room, but they mostly just want to unwind all the puke, use their brain to make it so it never happened. And puke is something you can never unwind.

One time I did one of these, and the guy who owned the house, he stood there in horror, handing me paper towels one at a time. A paper towel would be totally saturated, and a whole roll later you couldn't even tell any cleaning had gone on whatsoever.

If you do a puke like this right, it goes everywhere. And everyone has a limit. Some find the limit when puke mostly fills an ash tray, and a cigar on the edge is still burning and starts cooking the puke. Actually, I don't think I've ever seen anyone go beyond that. That's pretty much the touchdown plus conversion of puking on poker tables.

What's my move?

I just start sweeping puke and paper towels and the whole tablecloth into a garbage bag.

And the money.

Sometimes they see the money go in, but is \$20 of your money worth having if it's covered in puke? Some people say yes, but most people just want this whole thing to be over. And if they get testy about it, I've always got another puke on deck.

When I go out to my car with my bag full of puke and money, there's a guy out there leaning against my car. I don't get all bent out of shape about people leaning on my car, but the problem is I have a really shitty car, so even though I don't get bent out of shape, my car does get pretty bent out of shape when people lean on it. Or lightly brush against it. If I drive faster than about 40, the wind starts to warp the frame.

This guy leaned on my car looks slick. It's hard to describe someone who looks slick because when I do, the person just sounds like an asshole.

Okay, this guy was wearing cool cowboy boots. When I tried to wear cowboy boots, I couldn't pull it off. I thought cowboy boots didn't work with socks because cowboys probably didn't have socks. The smell of cowboy boots with no socks, it changes a person. But with this guy, you could tell his shoes didn't smell bad at all, and his feet probably didn't even sweat. Meanwhile I had to burn a pair of boots that I only wore like four times. It was the only way.

The guy said, "Nice work in there."

I covered my mouth and said, "Thanks." I covered my mouth because I definitely still had puke breath.

The guy, the slick guy, he reached in his pocket, and he pulled out a thing of gum. He held it out to me, and I went to take a stick, but he said, "Keep it. The whole thing. I don't chew gum."

I said thanks and chewed a piece, and then I put in another piece right away because I could tell one wasn't going to cut it. The first piece sort of absorbed the puke flavor from my mouth, so it just tasted like puke flavor gum with just a little wintergreen. Puketergreen. Great name, bad flavor.

By the time the slick guy said, "Want to take a ride? I have a business offer for you," I had to nod because my mouth was too full of gum to say actual words.

Getting out of the car was good. To stretch my legs. And to get away from the bag of puke money that I brought in with me. The driver guy said I should just leave it, that I stood to make a ton of cash and wouldn't need garbage bags full of puke money. But I didn't get where I am today by leaving behind money just because it was covered in puke. In fact, I got where I am today by OTHER people doing that exact thing. So no dice, buddy.

The driver led me into a warehouse. Or what looked like a warehouse from outside, anyway. Inside, it had this office sort of room with a big table and some couches that were ripped to look crappy, but you could tell they were almost brand new and probably ripped to make them look old and like they belonged in a warehouse where criminals come together to make plans.

There was a guy sitting at a desk. The grown-up kind of desk, which you can tell is an adult desk because you can't see the person's legs from the front of the desk.

The desk guy said, "Ah, Mr. Belding. Nice to meet you."

I shook his hand. He said, "Now, I assume your name isn't really Mr. Belding."

This guy was quick. Or maybe stupid. At this point, it was hard to tell if he was smart. If he knew my fake poker name and that it was fake, he was probably smart. But if he knew that because he watched a lot of *Saved By The Bell* reruns like I did, he was probably dumb. I must have wasted a lifetime or two on that show, and still the only name I could remember to use as a fake name was "Mr. Belding." I couldn't even remember Mr. Belding's first name, so I avoided saying the full fake name, which was Zach Morris Belding.

I took a chance that the guy was smart. Banking on a total stranger being smarter than me is the safe bet.

I said, "They call me Nails."

The desk guy looked over my shoulder to the driver. The driver said, "You're sure this is our only option?"

The desk guy said, "There's no reason to lie. I already know all about you. I know you watched *Saved By The Bell* religiously, I know your name is Elmer, and I know you have special, should we say, gifts?"

The desk man stood up, and he lifted a black sheet off of a big piece of foam board set up on a tripod, sort of the thing you'd do for a big business presentation or maybe like a science fair. I heard those posterboards were designed to be wide so the word "Volcano" would fit on it.

The desk man said, "I'm Reginald." His poster board had his picture on it with the name "Reginald" in big letters underneath.

He took the foam board off the stand and threw it off to the side, and underneath that was another foam board that had the driver's picture and his name, which was Ace.

I said, "Hold on. He gets to be Ace and I don't get to be Nails?"

Reginald said, "That's his given name. Nothing to be done."

I scowled at Ace. But really, when I did, I was scowling through him and at my parents, who I think were in that general direction. Elmer? Really? When a name like Ace was perfectly available?

The next foam board had my face on it, and it said Elmer. The picture was a bad one. Ace and Reginald, their pictures looked really good, like they put those pictures up on purpose to look awesome. Mine was like the kind of picture you see in a magazine, and underneath it says, like, "Look who got FAT! And stupid!"

In the picture I had a bucket of chicken, and it was cradled close up against me with one arm while I used my other arm to dig inside. They captured the exact moment that I figured out

I'd eaten all the breasts. I would get all breasts, but I think saying breasts a lot, even in a chicken situation, makes me sound like a sex pervert. So I eat the thighs and wings, too.

Reginald lingered on the card with my picture longer than he needed to. Also, the other people in the room already knew who I was, so I don't know why they needed my picture and name anyway. It was all a little excessive.

Then he moved on and showed the next board, which had a picture of a big building.

"I'm sure you recognize this building," Reginald said.

I absolutely didn't. It looked like a really long, low building floating in mid air. I'd never seen one like that, and then Reginald said, "Oh, damn it," and turned the poster board so it was longer up and down than it was sideways.

I still didn't recognize the building, but that was fine because Reginald didn't seem to care about that at all anymore. He whipped that posterboard so it spun across the warehouse and slid across the floor.

He said, "This is what's inside the building," and he showed me a picture of two doors, and next to the two doors there was a toilet.

"This," he said, and he reached in his pocket, pulled out this rod, and extended it. One of those pointers that's like a radio antenna someone stole off my old Pontiac. "This is why we need you." He slapped the pointer's tip hard against the toilet.

He pushed the pointer antenna thing closed, and he said, "What do you think?"

I looked at Ace, but Ace looked right back at me. They only wanted to hear what I thought, not like a vote or a brainstorming thing. Since my job isn't really an office thing, sometimes I don't pick up on when brainstorming is happening and not happening. And I get mixed up because I want to be in a brainstorm so bad.

My mouth was wide open. I must've looked real stupid. In fact, I'm sure I looked real stupid because there was a big posterboard picture of me laying on the floor, and in the picture I had almost the same stupid, open-mouth look on my face that I did right now.

I closed my mouth and clapped. A couple times, pretty slow. Clapping is something I'm pretty good at. I know the right speed to clap, the right times. I never clap except when I'm supposed to, and I'm never the last person to stop clapping. This isn't a really useful talent or anything, nothing to do with the story. It's just something that, you know, if I ever get married and, you know, stuff starts to annoy you about the other person? Well, clapping wrong won't be on my wife's list of complaints. I collect the things that won't annoy my wife so when it's time to make my case to get married, I'll be ready. I'm not sure if that's how it works, where you make an argument to get married, but either way, I'm ready.

Reginald waited, and I stopped clapping (at the perfect time), and had to say, "Okay. But I don't get it."

Reginald re-extended his antenna pointer and wapped it on the picture of the toilet. "This," he said, "Is the Shinrino CX, the ultimate in toilet technosecurity."

I nodded. Almost clapped again, but no. Not yet. A lesser clapper would've fallen for that one.

"In addition to adjustable height, warmth, and a laser-guided bidet, it analyzes the deposits made by anyone sitting on it."

Reginald swirled the pointer thing around on the toilet picture.

"The micro brain located here can tell if a stool meets a size, density, weight, and color requirement, accurate to an extreme degree."

Reginald moves the toilet picture aside, and there's a picture of a man. He's a normal-looking guy. Maybe like your neighbor, but not your neighbor. The guy they would get to play your neighbor in a movie.

Pictured here, Dr. Llewellyn Jeffers. Dr. Jeffers has the same routine every day. He wakes up at the same time, eats the same oatmeal from the same bowl, and after driving the same route to work, he opens his the secure vault in which he works by...defecating into his Shinrino CX Security Toilet. The stool is analyzed, and, provided it passes, which it always does as Dr. Jeffers is regular in *all* things, he gains access to his workstation."

Reginald goes to shorten his pointer again, but he stops and asks if I have any questions.

"Yes, several," I say. "One, is Llewellyn a girl's name? Two, what does this have to do with me? Three, uh..."

I started by saying I had several questions, but only two came out. And really, I came up with that second question about what it had to do with me on the fly, and I thought I could ride the momentum into some even better questions. But I crapped out pretty quick.

Ace, his feet up on the table so we could see his cool cowboy boots, said, "Do we really need this idiot? I can take a shit. I take shits all day."

Reginald yelled at Ace through his teeth. This is hard to describe, but it was really scary. He said, "Shut up! Yes, we need him."

"Why?' Ace said.

"Yeah, why?" I said.

Reginald turned on me now, but he closed his eyes, breathed in through his nose, and smiled. He said, "Because without you, we can't defeat the Shinrino CX. And without defeating the Shinrino CX, we can't pull off one of the greatest heists of all time"

Reginald led me into a room that looked sort of like a bathroom, but sort of like a science room. Do you remember the room in *Rocky IV* where Ivan Drago was training and taking steroids, and that hot babe who was Russian but still hot even to us Americans was holding a clipboard or something? This room looked like that, but instead of a treadmill and some weight machines and stuff, there was a big toilet.

Reginald stood next to the toilet, clapped his hand down on top of the tank.

"The Shinrino CX," he said. "Exactly like the one Dr.Llewelyn has."

That's when I remembered that nobody answered my question about this Ellen name being a girl's name, but I decided to let it go.

Reginald said, "You'll have to excuse me. To discuss your part in the heist, I will have to use some...undesirable terminology."

"Like what?" I said. "Boobs? Jugs? Big wet sloppy titties?"

"No!" Reginald yelled. "Nothing like that. Terms related to the expelling of fecal matter."

I didn't even consider those bad terms. Taking dumps is natural. You might also think that boobs are natural, but trust me, in the context I view them, there's nothing natural going on whatsoever. I'm a disgusting pervert. You're reading a book by a sick pervo. Deal with it. It's who you are now.

Reginald removed his hand from the toilet tank and wiped it with a handkerchief.

"You've got exceptional...talents. And in order to capitalize on your talents, you'll need training."

I said, "Haha, totally. Listen, I still don't know what is going on here."

Ace came into the toilet room and leaned against the doorway. He was eating an apple, cutting it with a huge knife. Like really huge. He was kind of struggling because the knife was so much bigger than what he needed for the apple, but he stuck with it.

Ace said, "You need to take a shit in that fancy toilet, just like the doc's, and that gets us into the vault."

"Oooh," I said. "I get it."

I didn't. But you probably do by now, so I'll spare you all the extra explanation. It took a really long time. It's embarrassing for me. I mean, I'm stupid, but this whole thing was stupid even for me. You might think it's easy to explain a stupid idea to a stupid person. That's what I thought, too. But it turns out everything is hard to explain to a stupid person. That's kind of what defines us stupid.

Just to say it again: I'm stupid.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Sections of this book have come under criticism because to some readers, it appears that Elmer's lack of understanding is a convenient device to help readers along, giving more exposition. Although it was difficult to confirm the exact dialog in most of the stories laid out in these pages, after interacting with the author on multiple occasions, it's the opinion of this Editor that these...troubles are in no way created to assist reader comprehension.

Some people are stupid.

We had to put a team together. I thought I was the last person, but we had a bunch of other people we needed.

If you're a petty criminal, which I definitely was because I never let ANYTHING go, then you've been part of a couple of these, and you get to know the types involved. Personally, I learned by watching a lot of movies.

Reginald was the mastermind, of course. You could tell because he already seemed rich, and he was tidy, and he told us what to do all the goddamn time. Seriously, "mastermind" means the same thing as "jerkass bossy asshole."

Ace was the knife expert. I didn't know why we needed a knife expert. But I still didn't really know why we needed a me either, so I tried not to say anything. Plus, if you want to smacktalk someone on the team, don't smacktalk the knife guy. You smacktalk...I don't know, a guy who does graphic design for the crew's t-shirts.

By the way, turns out nobody makes us t-shirts when we do a heist. Seems like a wasted opportunity. I made a t-shirt for me. It said "Heist 2016." It wasn't 2016 anymore by the time I finished the shirt, so I never wore it, and eventually I put it out for the thrift store pick-up day. I figured some hipster asshole would find a 2016 shirt old enough to be vintage.

The bigger the score, the bigger the team. Reginald said we needed a pretty solid team, and the part he didn't say as clear, we maybe needed a team that wasn't so expensive. Underdogs is how I like to think of them.

The problem with underdogs, everyone wants to root for the underdog, but in my experience, nobody wants to rob a bank with an underdog. For that, most people want an overdog. So we sat at a table with pads of paper and got down to interviewing.

Interview 1:

Reginald asked the guy, "Why do you want to join our heist?"

The guy said, "My son...he's very sick and—"

“Next!”

The guy started to talk again, and Reginald said, “Unless you want to join your son in the hospital, I suggest you leave immediately.”

The guy got up and left, lightly weeping.

Reginald said, “Trust me. Men like him will help with the heist, then his conscience will hit, and he’ll do the “right” thing in the end because he’ll learn a lesson from his son about what what bravery means or some such nonsense.”

Interview 2:

Reginald asked, “Why do you want to join our heist?”

The guy said, “I quite like stabbing people.”

Ace DID NOT like this answer, probably because another knife guy is threatening to his spot on the team. So I got really interested.

“Hmm, yes, fascinating,” I said. “Tell me, could you stab just a couple people, but not kill them. Stab them non-lethally?”

He pondered it. I gave him a star on his application because he was being thoughtful. He said, “I’ve been trained to only stab them that I want dead.”

And I said, “That’s exactly the answer I wanted to hear. You’re hired.”

It wasn’t the answer I wanted to hear, but it sounded very cool, and I didn’t want to look like a hopeless numbnuts in front of this cool guy.

Reginald said, “Uh, we were told you were a second-story man, not a knife man.”

The guy said, “Oh. Well, I’ve stabbed a lot of people. Reckon some of them were on the second floor of a building.”

I said, “That’s just what I wanted to hear also. You’re hired!”

Reginald shook his head. Ace said, "I'll walk him out."

I'm pretty sure Ace stabbed the guy on the way out. Mostly because Ace came back in, and he was wiping his knife off and talking really loud on the phone about how he just stabbed some asshole. And then he said how maybe this other asshole is next. And then he pointed a finger at me like a gun and made a shooting noise. Which is stupid. He's supposed to be a knife guy.

Interview 3:

"Why do you want to join our heist?"

This guy was in a full tuxedo. Maybe a little overdressed, but at least he made an attempt, unlike most of the other idiots. He said, "I am a magician!" And then, poof, he made a bunch of flowers come out of his sleeve. He offered them to me, and I took them, and Reginald covered his face with his hand and Ace shook his head at me.

Then the guy made a poof of smoke, and he disappeared. Or, at least, he moved over further on the couch.

"Thank you," Reginald said.

The magician stood, put on his hat, and started to walk out. He made this little twitch, and then blood rolled down the side of his face. I figured we missed out on a cat in that hat, possibly an aggressive rabbit.

Reginald said, "What happened to all the professionals who used to operate in the area?"

Ace said, "Man, it just got too hard. People moved on. Remember that guy, the safecracker guy, egghead, glasses?"

"Yes."

“That guy’s restoring old typewriters for hipsters.”

“No kidding?”

“Yeah, he’s—”

I said, “Guys, I liked the magician.” I smelled the flowers the magician gave me, which didn’t help my case, but I said, “I think I saw a movie about bank robber magicians. I’m almost positive they got away with the money.”

Ace said, “You don’t even know for sure if they got away with the money?”

The truth is, the plot got a little complicated, and one of the good guys sort of looked like one of the bad guys. So, no, I wasn’t for sure who got away with what in the end.

I said, “Like, 90% sure.”

Here are the guys we ended up with:

Some Old Grandpa:

Pretty much your standard grandpa. Your sort of Vegas-y grandpa. You just got the feeling he was like a grandpa, except he probably also knew a lot of hookers. Supposedly he was going to help me train to shit. Which I don’t think I need training on. I’ve been shitting since before I was born. For real. I came out of my mom on a tidal wave of shit. I’m told this is bad, but this is the one time shitting inside my mom gives me cred, so I feel I have to take it.

Some Lady:

There was a lot of discussion about the lady, who is supposed to get all the junk we needed for the heist. On one hand, Ace and Reginald agreed that she wasn’t the best. On the other hand, Reginald talked about a group that had robbed a casino a few months back, and it was a group

of all guys. “You wouldn’t believe the uproar,” he said. “The days of the all male crew are over.” He didn’t appreciate a joke I made about giving her 20% less of the take, as is industry standard. But he also didn’t appreciate my joke about Penguins/Pencilguins. Maybe because it wasn’t worked out all the way yet, but I didn’t know how to present it in a funny way, not as funny as the wage gap, anyway.

The Wheelman:

This guy was the driver. He had on white, fingerless leather gloves. I was sold on that alone. I’ve never really understood driving with gloves on, but that’s probably because I mostly do driving wrong. I’ve been in so many accidents.

A Barista:

This one was a surprise, but Reginald explained that they needed someone who was used to handling shit, and people DO really shit up coffee shop bathrooms a lot. It makes sense. He called himself Mocha, and I wasn’t sure if this was a codename he liked because he was a barista or because he’s black. Or both. I thought it was probably racist to even wonder about it, so I pretended like I completely understood the nickname and then made a chart on a piece of paper. The chart had the word “Mocha” in the middle, then on one side, “Barista” and on the other side, “Black.” Then I started writing likely reasons it was one thing or the other. Then I lost track of the chart and spent the next few weeks piss scared that Mocha would find it and wonder what the hell I was doing.

The Tech Guy:

You need this guy to be good at computer stuff, but not TOO good. If he's too good, there's no excitement or dramatic tension. And don't spend a lot of time on the radio with him. In the movies and stuff they do a lot of tricks to make this guy exciting, like they have music when he's on the screen and he has a cool haircut and maybe he twirls a drumstick or something while he types. In real life, these guys mostly just type stuff and click stuff, and they almost always wear a bluetooth and they're talking to god knows who the whole time. In fact, the biggest thing to avoid is finding someone who's playing some bullshit elves and swords game online while they're supposed to be opening the secure elevator or whatever.

Also, if you are one of these guys, let me give you a piece of advice I got from the movies: Never leave the van.

Think of the van as your warm nest. Your womb of sorts. In the van, you are the master of what's going on. Outside the van, you're a fat nerd. Inside the van, you're able to do wonders with single keystrokes. Outside the van, you're able to have people wondering if you're having heatstroke after walking like ten steps.

I don't mean to stereotype people who are good at computers. I will confess, though, that I pushed hard to hire the guy in the worst shape because that way, when he inevitably gets out of the van, the cops or the mob or whoever are all distracted while they're hitting him with clubs, which takes extra time if he's hyper-obese because there's a lot of ground to cover, it gives everyone else a chance to escape.

The Second Story Man:

This is the guy who specializes in break-ins on the second story of houses and other buildings. Usually a good idea.

The Third Story Man:

It's important to know which story the important stuff is on. Otherwise you have to hire a different man for every floor, and that eats your budget away like termites in a wood factory (which I guess is a forest, technically).

We had an argument about the lab, being underground, whether that was a second story or a minus-one story, and we talked about whether we needed a Minus-One Story Man. But the Second and Third Story guys said they could work it out. Maybe some subtraction equation or something.

With our crew intact, we were ready for a tryout.

I didn't know what that meant before, but a tryout is where you take everyone on the team and they try out their skills. After Ace explained it to me and sighed a lot while he explained it, then pushed me down a couple times, I agreed that a tryout is pretty self-explanatory. He's right, it is.

Our tryout was to pull a small job and see if the team could deliver on their skills, steal something, and get away. That way, if it's small, if we got caught, it was smaller stakes. That's what Reginald kept talking about, stakes. Which must have been a hint for when he told us he wanted us all to steal steaks from this nice steakhouse. I didn't figure out that joke until right now when I wrote it down and the the editor told me I spelled "steaks" wrong. It's a pretty good joke. Kind of sucks that Reginald didn't get any credit. Especially since he's not a funny guy most of the time.

The steakhouse was called Steakhaus. There was the two dots over the "u" in Steakhaus, but I don't know how to type that on a computer. Do me a favor, if you see this book somewhere and

there aren't dots above Steakhaus, will you write them in? That way, whoever gets the next copy won't know I couldn't do it. Also, I guess cross out all these lines that explain it.

Steakhaus was fancy. I knew because they had their menu outside in a frame so you could see what they had. I'd never seen an outside menu except the ones you drive up next to. I don't even know why they have menus at burger places. Just drive up and order a couple double stacks. They'll just make whatever they think you want. Nobody wants to spend time with an idiot who doesn't know he's somewhere besides Wendy's. Besides, it's your job to know what burgers are on your menu, not mine. I came here to eat until I'm so full it forces a poo out. Not to learn.

Each team member came up with a different plan to steal a steak.

Ace was going to get his steak straight from the source. Being a knife expert, all he had to do was walk by the carcass they had in the back and slice one off. "Quick flick of the wrist," he said.

The lady from the group said she paid off a guy to turn the power off at a certain time. When the power grid went down, she'd grab some other diner's steak in the confusion. She showed up to the restaurant in a super low cut dress. It didn't seem necessary, but I thought maybe she would cram the steak in her cleavage. Robbery people seem more into cleavage holding stuff than regular people. If you ever see someone take something out of her cleavage, and it's not some cake you just saw fall in her cleavage, look out. A robbery happened. Or it's about to.

The barista told me he knew someone who worked at the Steakhaus, so he was just going to have his connection hook him up. Restaurant people, right?

Steakhaus was on the ground floor, so the story men got a pass.

That left me and the old man.

I didn't really have a plan, so I fell back on old habits. I sat down at a table, filled up on bread, then walked up to a diner, hurled on his steak, said I was so sorry, picked up the steak, started wiping it off, and walked away with it. Classic me. Works even better with food than with a pile of money.

Reginald was in the van outside with the wheelman. He told me to go ahead and leave the steak outside unless I was planning to consume it. I wasn't. I hadn't even thought of it until he said it, and when he said it I almost hurled again. Then I thought maybe if I drank a bunch of A1 before I threw up on a steak, it might be like an acid-y marinade. Which was also such a gross idea I almost threw up again. I sent this idea to the A1 company, I don't know, for a commercial or something. I mostly wrote it down to get it out of my head.

Usually when I send in a commercial idea, a company sends back a letter about how they can't use it, and no I can't get paid, and no I can't take a check and scratch out my name and put in A1 Company and then cash it to save them the time of sending me a check.

But this time, the A1 people, they sent me a letter saying that if I sent them more letters they would take legal action.

Ace came back to the van with a chunk of meat. It didn't look like a steak, but he said he really mostly knows how to kill stuff, not butcher it. We argued about the meaning of the word "butcher" for awhile, but I had to admit that his steak was a lot better than mine because it was probably one you could eat.

The old grandpa came back in a sequined woman's bathing suit bottom. And he had a steak.

"Easy," he said. "I'm old. My body is a wasteland. All you gotta do is you get topless, rub a steak on your chest, and it's yours."

The old man was kind of horning in on my style, ruining everyone's appetite, just with the outside of his body instead of the insides. But I had to respect him. It's important to respect your elders and also old people.

The van ride back to the warehouse was weird. Some weird because the old man used the word "topless" a lot to describe himself, which is a weird word for an old man. Mostly it was weird because we all had to sit with an old man in sequined woman's bathing suit bottoms, and he was eating a steak that he rubbed into his curly chest hair an hour ago.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

This note regards the need to point out that diversity is always a positive aspect of a work team of any kind, whether that be diversity of race, age, or what have you. In fact, for the purposes of the rest of this book, please read the "some lady" team member as a woman of color. It's uncertain whether this is true, however assuming that she's white reinforces a default whiteness that we are not comfortable with because it makes it harder to sell a shitload of books.

Before we could break into the vault by me taking a dump, we had to steal one of the professor's dumps. That's the only way we'd know what exactly my dump needed to look like and be made out of.

This is always part of a big heist. You have to do a mini heist first. Then you do the big heist. I don't know why it always works out this way, but it does. It's like heists follow some kind of set storyline or something. Or maybe it's just that most of us who do heists don't have a lot going on, so we like to extend the heist as much as possible. Think about it. We spend like a billion dollars on vans with computers in them and weird drills and things that cut holes in glass

and stuff. If it was about the stuff we get from the heist, wouldn't we just buy that stuff instead of the wacky heist gizmos?

Besides, it's important to stay busy. And I don't like most hobbies like model trains or whatever. My grandpa liked model trains. He made tiny trees and stuff. And a little conductor. My grandpa shot himself in the downstairs closet and left his train running. It ran for months before anyone noticed he was dead. They really build those little trains to go the distance, turns out.

To get the shit log we needed, we pulled off what I'm told was a very exciting mini heist. I'm told that in some ways it even overshadowed the ultimate heist. The thing is, I wasn't there. They didn't need me, and anyone who wasn't necessary was cut out of this heist in order to keep things as simple as possible. I think that's bullshit, but I'm the one who was cut out, and everyone else seemed cool with it. So I have to assume that I only think it's bullshit because I was the one cut out, and really it made a lot of sense.

Anyway, they stole a shit for me to copy, and that was reportedly an exciting time.

Someone who was there should write a book about it.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Many readers have strong reactions to this section and its non-apology for missing one of the bigger events related to the final heist, and the editors of this version ask that you understand that Elmer, our memoirist, was just as unhappy to be cut out of the action as you, the reader, are to be missing it. Because it's likely to save us some time, we've decided to do a brief FAQ section regarding this portion of the work.

Q: Can I get a refund?

A: No. The publisher will not offer a refund. If your local bookseller would like to offer you a refund, that is their prerogative. If you aren't able to get a satisfactory response from the local seller, we recommend selling the book to a used bookstore, preferably one that doesn't know about this omission in the manuscript. Depending on whether or not the store credit is good, you might consider returning this book for store credit, purchasing another of our excellent titles, and thereby getting a roundabout refund that is mutually beneficial.

Q: Is there any chance of a revised version coming out?

A: No. We found the narrator of this story exceedingly difficult to work with, and therefore we won't be working with him ever again. Not for all the tea in China. We don't even like tea, so don't even offer.

Q: What about the so-called "Antagonist's Version" we've heard about?

A: Yes, the version that is supposedly written by the character named here as "Ace." This version has been thoroughly discredited by our marketing/discreditation department, and we do not recommend perusing that volume for any reason. And we ask that you keep in mind, most of the time in a movie when someone says to leave a book alone, it's for good reason. In the movies, you might fool around with a book you were warned about, and you might have a Beetlejuice on your hands before you know it. Are we saying that reading the "Antagonist's Version" will cause you to nearly die, lose your eccentric, fat, gay assistant, and force your daughter into an underage marriage that's made especially underage by the fact that the groom is much, much older, having gone several years beyond death? No, we are not saying that very specific thing. But we're also not above putting it in your head that something like this could

happen, and if it did, you'd be forced to wonder about the warning you were given in this editor's note.

The next task was for me to learn how to shit just like the Professor, whose shit the team had successfully stolen in what sounded like a great time, at least based on what I got out of the grandpa when he was changing out of his sequined bikini bottoms again.

You might think it's easy to copy someone's shit, especially for someone with my talents. But you'd be wrong. Have you ever tried to shit like anyone other than yourself? Probably not. Imagine if you tried to do an accent for the first time when you were an adult, like 40 years old. Before that moment, it never occurred to you that you could talk like anyone other than yourself. How good do you think you'd be at it?

Now imagine that same scenario, but you're making the accent with your asshole.

We had to figure out first what went into the shit. What was the shit before it was shit? That was going to be key in replicating the shit exactly.

We tried looking through the Professor's garbage, but it turns out he liquifies all of his garbage and pours the sludge down the drain. I watched him use this big tank to liquify a bunch of stuff. It was horrifying, and he really should get rid of that machine before he brings a girl over. Because I would definitely advise any girls out there, if you go to a weird Professor guy's house on a date, and if he has a trash liquifying machine that you could fit inside, date's over. Don't risk it. I don't KNOW that he ever used it on a human woman, but I do know there's a reason they tell you to meet up for first dates in public places, and that reason is a giant tank that could turn a woman into black liquid that goes down the sink.

Because we couldn't get the Professor's diet figured out, we had to bring in The Somm.

People that Reginald knew were one of two kinds of people: people who were scared shitless of Reginald, or people who were some other kind of person. I don't know what the other kind is because every person I met was scared shitless of Reginald.

Including The Somm.

Reginald sat the Somm down. He was a young guy, looked like an asshole bartender who was dressed like an old man, like he raided his grandfather's closet for a black vest and a bow tie. He even had a sleeve garter. I know what that is because one time at a casino I asked the dealer how come all the dealers had underwear on their arms. They don't like when you ask them that.

Reginald poured The Somm a glass of wine. The Somm swallowed down a little bit and then he said where it came from and what kind of grapes it was made out of and a bunch of other shit I don't even understand about wine. The only thing I know about wine is it's perfect for reading romance novels in the bath tub. I know because this is a hobby of mine. But we don't need to talk about that. We're about to get to the grossest thing I've ever seen, much grosser than my own nude body in the bath, which, let me tell you, barf city.

Then The Somm ate a popcorn. Like one piece of popcorn. Then he said where it was from, which movie theater, and he even said which movie was playing.

Then Reginald put a dish in front of The Somm. It had a metal cover on it, and when he took it off, there was a little piece of shit.

Reginald said, "I won't lie to you. This is human feces."

The Somm, even with that, was still too scared to look at Reginald.

Reginald said, "I need to know everything. What's in it. How long it was processed in the body." He leaned in closer. "Everything."

My editor keeps telling me to just sort of “fade to black” at this point and then come back with the information. He says the readers will connect the dots and know what happened. But I say fuck that. I had to watch it. It’s tainted my entire life. Every time I almost feel happy, I see this guy at the table, the tiny piece of turd on a dish, him picking it up with a fork and it falls apart. The turd, he pushes the fork into his mouth, and I see, I swear, I see a little bit of it smear on his front teeth while he pushes it all the way in.

He chews on the side of his mouth, the way you might chew a wet Tootsie Roll, breathes through his mouth, gags. The shit stuck on his teeth, dark brown in the spaces between. He chews with his mouth open, and a tear rolls down his face, and with his mouth open I see some of the turd in the pit of one of his molars. Human shit stuck in his teeth.

There was this time I stepped out of my apartment, and it was a really nice day, and college was back in so there were a bunch of girls around wearing their almost no clothes they bought so they could go back to school and impress everyone with how short they could make shorts. “This summer we cracked the code!” And I was almost happy. Then I thought about The Somm, about how he swallowed, and watching him swallow, it looked like how it looks in the cartoons when Bugs Bunny has to swallow a giant pill or something, where you see the outline of it go all the way down his neck. I could see how long the shit slid down to land in his stomach, at least twice as long as a normal piece of food or something.

I’m sure Reginald would have killed The Somm if he didn’t eat the shit, and I learned a valuable lesson that day: If someone threatens to kill you unless you eat a piece of human shit, you really should consider both options. You can just die. You might not have done everything you wanted to in life, but who does? And maybe you should think about whether one of the things you wanted to do in life was never eat human shit, which is still an option if you choose

death. So Reginald shoots you in the face? So what? At least you completed your goal of not eating human shit ever in your life. It's a humble but noble goal.

I started my new diet the next day. I was supposed to start that same day, right after The Somm came, but I couldn't keep any food down. On account of the shit eating.

Remember? When the guy ate the log of shit? Off a plate with a knife and fork and everything?

I know I just told you about it. But see, this is what I'm saying. When you see someone eat shit, it doesn't just go away. It haunts you. A LOT.

I started my new diet to replicate the scientist's the next day, for real this time.

Turns out this asshole scientist was vegan. AND he was on a no-sugar thing, too. Normally I wouldn't care about what someone eats unless it's hilarious or a piece of shit (for the full story on that one, see the earlier chapters of this book. Kind of hard to believe you forgot that already. You should maybe see a doctor, get checked out), but this would've been a great excuse. If the guy ate nothing but donuts, I'd be on nothing but donuts for weeks, and it'd be like, "Hey, what can you do? It's a living!" Or if he ate the finest steaks every night, hey, I would have to eat tons of filets. Even fast food would've been great. Did you know they have chicken cylinders at Burger King? They don't call them "chicken cylinders," which makes sense because that doesn't sound like something you want to eat. But it's something they MAKE, and then they sell chicken cylinders to people like it's a normal thing to eat, and I know this because I spent all my time eating disgusting healthy food and staring at fast food menus and fantasizing.

Instead of weird shapes of chicken, this guy is into quinoa. Which I didn't realize was the same thing as "kwin-oh-uh," that disgusting shit they have in the rice aisle. Why people buy that

is beyond me. The rice is right fucking there. The answer is staring you in the face. It's an ancient Chinese secret that's not even secret and never was, they were just like, "Here's a thing that's not too horrible for eating." And we ignore that and eat this shit, these like rice balls, instead.

I spent a lot of time shitting and a lot of time poring over fast food restaurant menus. Did you know Wendy's still has baked potatoes? How do you, as Wendy's have the guts to sell baked potatoes? Isn't that like McDonald's selling bananas or something?

Anyway, after my vegan experience, I can tell you two things:

One, switching to a vegan diet gives you heinous shits.

Two, switching away from a vegan diet after you finish a heist also gives you heinous shits.

But after my stomach settled in, I was able to focus and produce some shits that looked almost just like the scientist's. Same consistency, same size.

I bet you're wondering whether we brought The Somm in again. To eat my shit, compare my shit to the scientist's shit. Well, it turns out he went ahead and shot himself. Probably because he ate human shit. So instead we just bought the same kind of toilet the scientist had, copied the scientist's toilet settings, then put his old shit in there to set the "combination," then swapped it out for one of mine to see if it matched. And boom. It matched. For a hot minute I was hot shit.

Then things took a turn.

"There's a competing crew going for the lab!" Ace said. He smashed his fists down on the tabletop when he said it, and a bunch of dishes and stuff rattled. That's when I figured out why

he must have put out all those dishes a few minutes ago, so when he smashed his hands down it sounded impressive. Good call, Ace.

Reginald didn't react, even with all the dishes. "I'm aware of the other crew. We don't have anything to worry about."

"Oh, no?" Ace said. "Did you hear they've got their own shitter?"

Reginald DID react to that. He reacted by looking at me with hate in his eyes.

To tell you what Reginald's hate look was like, have you ever owned a cat? And have you ever put clothes on that cat? And when it's disabled and flopping around on the floor, it takes a break and looks at you, and you know it's thinking that it's going to figure out how to kill you, no matter what it takes, even if it has to do it by lighting itself on fire and running around the apartment? Like even if it means a horrible, burning end to the cat's life, he thinks it's worth it to get you good? That's Reginald's hate look.

And I swear, in that moment, I first noticed his eyes were cat shape.

No, okay, that's bullshit. I don't want you to think there's a plot twist later or something where Reginald is a secret cat man. That would be so cool, but if that happened, this book would probably be called like *Invasion of the Cat Men And Their Names Is Reginald* or something. Something like that, but better. I had a long time to think of the real title for this book, and only like a second to come up with a fake title for that other book. Cut me some slack.

Ace smiled and said, "That's right. There's a second shitter out there."

Then I jumped in: "Hey, wait, am I the first shitter?"

Ace said, "Of course you're the first shitter."

Reginald said, "I don't like to use coarse language, but I have to concur with Ace on this matter. Of course you're the first shitter. Who did you think the first shitter was if not you?"

I had to think about that one. I guess because I hadn't thought about who else it might be. I didn't WANT it to be me, but you can't want something bad enough to make it true. One look at my disappointing butt shape can tell you that.

"Well, this is not good," Reginald said.

"Want me to stab him?" Ace said.

Reginald tented his fingers in front of his face. And Ace might've tented his pants in front of his penis. He REALLY likes stabbing people.

"Yes," Reginald said. "Yes, I think that's a good solution."

Ace said, "Good. Because nothing would make me happier than stabbing a shitter."

I said, "Can you guys maybe stop tossing around the word shitter? I'm not in love with that."

Ace said, "What do you care, he'll be dead in an hour."

I said, "Okay. It's just, you guys calling him a shitter this much makes me think that when I'm not around, you call me a shitter all the time."

"We absolutely do, duh" Ace said.

Reginald said, "Yes, again, I'm compelled to agree with Ace. We just called you a shitter to your face. Wouldn't any reasonable person conclude that we're also doing so when you're not around?"

Ace said, "Unless we're calling you shitter to your face and something worse behind your back."

Then we were all silent. I think we were all trying to come up with something worse that meant shitter but was even worse than shitter. Shitter's pretty bad. I can't say I'm surprised we didn't get anywhere beyond shitter.

You know what's funny about telling this story? When you tell it in person, people always doubt you. Seriously. They all of a sudden start doubting when you say that you can eat the same foods, concentrate, focus, and shit just like another person. Someone who has never in their life thought about trying to shit just like someone else ALL OF A SUDDEN has lots of opinions on what is and isn't possible when it comes to trying to shit just like someone else. It's so annoying. I don't go listen to a particle physics guy and be all, "Oh, I've never thought about particles or physics ever in my life, but here's how you're wrong and stupid and ugly and probably fart a lot."

People think they've taken a fair share of shits, so they know what's up. Particle physics is different, but shitting they understand. They've never been in a head-rom collider or whatever, but they've collided a shit with a toilet bowl many times. Been right at the epicenter.

But you know what? No, you don't know. If, when I tell you I was reading the same magazines as the Professor in order to get into his headspace, and that helped me get closer to his perfect shits, if you nod along like that makes sense, then you know something about shits. If you don't, then you don't know shit. About shits.

My editor told me to make this part of the book instructional, but I'm not going to. Because I'm the best there is, and the last thing I need is some young upstart stealing my anal thunder. Besides, one advantage of this book being so terrible is that I'm almost positive the editor isn't going to get this far. I wouldn't. I wouldn't have gotten past the eating human shit part, if I even got THAT far. I lived it in real life and barely survived.

But like i was saying, I read the same things on the toilet. You know what this guy liked to read? Skateboarding magazines. Old skateboard magazines from the 90's. Especially this one where I guess Larry Flynt decided to publish a skateboard magazine. Let it never be said that Larry Flynt doesn't know what people want. I always liked Larry Flynt. I felt like he was the anti-Hugh-Hefner, that he wasn't pretending he was some cool dude in a smoking jacket. He

was a smut peddler, damn it, and he was proud of it. He was one step removed from the guy selling tasteless nudes by opening his jacket on the street and revealing a bunch of polaroids pinned inside, \$2 bucks each.

These skateboard magazines were my downfall. They caused me a big ass problem. That's not supposed to be hyphenated, by the way. Not a big-ass problem, a big problem, and the big problem was happening in regards to my ass.

See, in one of the magazines, a writer named Dave Carnie wrote this article about using Nair to cut down on the hair around his asshole. It was kind of a brilliant idea. Because, like he put it, when you have a hairy asshole, it's like shitting through a mesh net. I was doing A LOT of wiping thanks to my new vegan diet, and because I was trying to replicate the Professor's experience, I was using the same cheap government toilet paper the cheap government bought him for work.

If I ever get famous and do a PSA, it's going to be about how offices and schools should get nicer toilet paper. You've got one life, one asshole. That'll be the slogan.

So I figured maybe I'd use some Nair on myself. I did just like Dave instructed, filled a basin with Nair and squatted down into it.

The first mistake I made was not finishing the article to see whether it worked for Dave and what the results might be.

The smell came before the pain, weirdly. The smell was pain, if I can be poetic for a second. Fuck you, I can write meaningful shit all up and down if I feel like it. You watch it or I'll re-release this book as one long poem, with a bunch of weird line breaks in it, like Shakespeare, and we'll see how you like it when I use words like forsooth and exeunt.

The smell was pain. Burning shit and hair. And chemical. I imagine it's what it smelled like when they burned those shit barrels in Nam, except it was coming from a spot on my body

that was not too far from my face, especially since I was bent over, asshole spread in the mirror to watch the progress. And there was a little bit of a berry smell, too. I don't know what geek decided berry smell would make Nair a better experience, but that person is stupid and definitely never tried their own product on their butt.

Not to be outdone by the smell, the other kind of pain, the normal kind you feel instead of smell, was quick, and it was fierce. Get a vigorous rubdown with sandpaper right on the button, you'll know what I was feeling. You know how if you have salsa that's too hot and you just can't stop the burn? That's where I was at, but imagine you butt chugged the salsa, and maybe the secret ingredient in the salsa was an opened-up nine volt battery.

I was breathless, lying on the floor, no pants but a shirt, and as the pain left, there was this huge relief because I figured I would never feel pain worse than that, so in a way it was good. One of the worst things to experience when I was alive was over. They say people who survive plane crashes end up really happy. This was my plane crash.

The bad side, the newly smooth lanes threw me off my game. The Professor must've had a hairy asshole, because when I changed the environment downstairs, I couldn't shit like him to save my life. Which is literally what I needed to do.

Ace picked at his teeth with his knife. And he kept slipping and nicking his gums, and then he'd say "Damn it," and Reginald would sigh. And that's how we were passing the afternoon when I decided to tell them I quit. There was just no way I could take that shit now, now that I'd "waxed the lane" down there and screwed everything up.

"Guys, gentlemen, uh, I quit."

Reginald tented his fingers. He said, "What are you playing at, here?"

I said, "I just don't, uh, feel good about taking what's not rightfully mine."

Ace burst out laughing. And then so did Reginald.

Reginald calmed down, removed his glasses, wiped a tear, and said, "Do you know why I steal?"

I said, "Because there's stuff you don't have that other people have? And if you steal it, then you can have the stuff and you don't not have the stuff anymore?"

Ace said, "What?"

Reginald waved him off. "I steal because I'm not good at anything else. If I could make the same money, live the same lifestyle by being a software engineer, of course I would do it. Software engineers don't go to prison."

"Well, no" I said, "but maybe they should." I never finished a single King's Quest game because those things were so goddamn impossible. Roberta Williams is on my most wanted list. I'd put her in a prison where she had to collect a series of items in order to escape. Put a banana in a fish? Why not?

Reginald said. "I'm not a good software engineer. Or actor, or barista. I'm good at stealing."

Ace said, "I think what Reginald is trying to say is like this: Do you think I would stab people if I had something I was better at?"

"Yes," I said. "You love stabbing. You'd do it for free, I bet. You're fuckin' nuts."

Ace tapped the side of his blade on his forehead. "Yeah, you're probably right," he said.

Reginald said, "There is no other life for you. That's what you fail to understand about this. Once you're in, all paths lead the same way. You've got one option, and it's to defecate, unlock the door, and make it all work."

He leaned closer, "Your feces is the linchpin of the whole operation."

Ace said, "Yeah. And also, I'll fuckin' stab you if you don't do it."

Reginald nodded.

I said, "What if I try and it doesn't work, but I tried to make it work?"

"Stab," Ace said.

"What if I call the cops and bring them in and tell you so you can get away and no one gets in trouble but me?"

"Stab," Ace said.

"What if I—"

"Look," Ace said. "The only thing that results in you not getting stabbed is taking that shit and making it work. That's it. And even then I might stab you."

"No," Reginald said. "No, you won't stab him if he succeeds."

"I might," Ace said.

"No!" Reginald yelled. "There are infinite scenarios that result in you stabbing him. Success is the only one that doesn't result in that stabbing. The odds are in your favor, but I'm confident our friend here will deliver the goods."

"More like deliver the bads," I said. No one laughed, so I said, "Because shit is gross, and you said goods."

Still nothing.

"So I changed goods to bads to be more like what's going to happen."

I'll spare you how long this went on and how in-depth I got with the joke, still thinking that if I explained it, everyone would laugh. Just know that we wasted an entire planning day on me explaining a joke that it turns out they both got right away, they just didn't like it.

The point isn't really the joke anyway. It's that I had to go through with the heist. I had to deliver the bads.

The Bads.

_____I underlined and capitalized that, just in case you didn't get it. With this particular joke, I have a history of that happening.

The only way to make it work with my friend asshole was to really become what I always knew I was meant to be: The Zen Master of shitting. I decided...

EDITOR'S NOTE:

In many books there is a moment of spiritual awakening. Sometimes this enhances the story, and sometimes this make the story worse. It leads the reader down a false path.

In this case, it's a little bit of both.

The narrator's awakening, though oft-analyzed in literary criticism and by those of the zen movements in the world of semi-professional defecation, is, well, crude. It's vile and disgusting, and because it's unnecessary here, it has been omitted from this publication.

The narrator has agreed to this change with the understanding that he'll retain the rights to publish his method later on, and he has stated that for the purposes of this manuscript you can just imagine the training montage from Rocky IV, but with more toilets, no women, less snow, but still some snow, and about the same number of John Cafferty songs, one, which is "Hearts on Fire."

And fortunately, our hero was able to get back up to speed.

The day of the heist was [note to editor: look up weather for that day and that's how I'll start this section. I forget what the weather was. You set the scene]

The tech guy radioed in to the warehouse from where he was parked, across the street from the lab. He was on a laptop. We were worried that it would look weird because we couldn't

rent one of those vans without windows. It turns out they don't rent those kinds of vans to people like Ace. Which is smart. Car rental places, you've done something correct. I don't know if you did it on purpose, but you stumbled into not renting cars to people who stab a lot of other people.

Lucky for us, right across the street from the lab was a library, so the tech guy just sat in his sedan with his laptop on his lap, and if anyone looked at him sideways, he was just supposed to pretend he was cranking it to whatever he was looking at using the library wifi from outside. It's the perfect cover. We've all been there.

The tech guy refused to let the wheelman drive his car, so the wheelman quit. I can't blame the tech guy. The wheelman was awesome at driving, but you know how you drive different when it's not your car, like how you'll throw it in drive when you're still reversing, or you'll see how close you can drive to a wall, or you'll put Vaseline all over the tires so you can do an awesome burnout? I think the wheelman drove every car like it wasn't his car.

The second story man was off the team. We had another argument about where a second-story man belongs. The lab is underground, which we all figured made the main floor the second story, but he got all enraged and told us that a main floor is not a second story, regardless of its elevation. He made a pretty good point about a basement being a mile higher in the air in Denver than it is in Portland, but anyway, he was just being kind of a shit and left.

The third story man left, too. I'm told third story men mostly follow what second story men do, and that stereotype is true in my experiences so far. What do main floor men do? Who knows.

The lady didn't leave, exactly.

Okay, she got stabbed. By Ace. He killed her.

This was kind of a big deal, not a great look for Ace to stab the only lady on our team. But as much as I'm not a fan of Ace, I have to say, I think he would stab absolutely anybody for almost no reason. He's an insane murderer, but he's not a sexist, when it comes to stabbing, as far as I can tell, anyway. In a way, him stabbing that woman was very equal opportunity. We should all be more like Ace.

The old man just up and died. He was old as hell. He took with him a wealth of knowledge. That, and, I'm pretty sure, a pen I'd been carrying around. He took that pen to the grave, and I'll never forgive him. Hence this writing. Not gonna lie, about 10% of the reason I wrote any of this down was just so everyone would know what an idiot asshole that old man was and how he stole my pen. Prove me wrong, old man's relatives. I dare you.

So, on the day of the heist, we were down to me, Ace, Reginald, and the tech guy. It was sort of a problem at the time, we almost didn't go through with it, but now I'm sort of glad we lost so many other team members because I don't have to tell you in this book where everyone was and what they were doing. It's way easier this way. My advice to young writers is if you think a life thing is about to happen, see if you can get most of the other people out of the area so you don't have to talk about them.

Ace showed up to the warehouse in an all black suit covered in knives. He had knife holsters in places that didn't even make sense. All four sides of his legs, like front and back and then the sides, knives. Knives on his shins and thighs. Reginald made him take off the ones on his knees because he couldn't walk right. And the ones that made it so Ace couldn't bend his elbows. Also, he had to take off the knife quiver on his back because all the knives were clanging around, and because they weighed a combined 85 pounds, and because of a pretty productive discussion we had regarding when a knife is no longer a knife and becomes a sword (for the record, Ace insisted that his long knives were still knives, but conceded that perception

is reality, and everyone in the lab would think he had swords, and he didn't want to spend the rest of his life insisting to other knife guys that he'd never used swords. This is a point of pride in the world of knife guys).

Reginald was dressed normal. For him. Suit. Bowtie. He did have cufflinks on with a little cat wearing a mask AND I JUST REALIZED THOSE WERE CATBURGLAR CUFFLINKS. Shit. I had this whole thing about how they were dumb and must have been a gift or something from a job that went wrong and his friend got shot, or maybe they belonged to the old man. Now I get it, it was just a joke. Man. See, this is why it's important to explain your joke when nobody laughs.

I was wearing a suit, but not a regular suit. It looked like a regular suit, but it had a velcro trap door in the back so I could sit down quick, dump, unlock the door, and then...well, I don't really know what I'm supposed to do after that. This would've been a good thing to think about, it turns out. But there are lots of good things to think about. We can't think about them all.

Me, Ace, and Reginald went in. Me in my suit, Reginald in his matching suit. We both had badges on. Not cool badges like a sheriff, but badges that just look like your driver's license. I hate how offices call those things badges. What a scam. If you're giving me a badge, it should be shiny, metal, and it should look like it'd kill someone if I threw it at them hard enough. Not just a dopey picture of me looking like a dope.

I looked dopey in my picture, by the way. The guy who made them, he said to smile, but not show teeth. I looked like a grandpa who didn't have any teeth to show. I swear, every time I get a picture like this done, they have a new weird rule that all the DMV people and ID people probably come up with at their parties and be like, "Oh, I bet that'll make 'em look hilarious!"

The tech guy was in Reginald's earpiece, which was disguised to look like a hearing aid. I always thought they should make headphones disguised as a hearing aid. That way, if you're

at a boring thing like a baptism or a baby shower where all the presents are for a baby who isn't even there yet or whatever, you could listen to whatever music you want. At least it'd be less boring. Why don't they play "Rock You Like a Hurricane" and stuff like that at baptisms? It's what we all want, and it really livens things up. I can tell you that from experience.

Reginald was talking quietly to the tech guy, and I kept asking what they were talking about. Then Reginald would try and tell me, then the tech guy must have been confused because Reginald would say, "Not you, THIS idiot." I would be more mad, but at least it sounded like he thought me and the tech guy were BOTH idiots.

When we got close to the front door, I said, "Radio silence, right?"

Reginald said, "You're on radio silence the whole time. That's why you don't have a radio."

This is normally when I think Reginald would've said something to boost my confidence, but because I said that stupid thing about radio silence, he just walked up to the door, swiped his keycard, and we were in.

Government buildings are so extremely boring. You know how on the movies they always show you that one room that's all lit up, there's a million buttons around screens and a radar with that cool lit up thing sweeping around in a circle? That's the one good room, I bet, because the rest is just hallways and shit. It looks like an elementary school, except there aren't as many bulletin boards in the hallway with stuff people colored. Instead there are bulletin boards that have stuff like other jobs people can do that sound boring as hell, or they'll have a note about not flushing tampons down the toilet.

If someone out there can invent a sewage system that handles tampons: instant millionaire.

“So,” I said. “I kinda have to take a shit.”

Reginald rubbed his face with his palm. “Yes,” he said. “I assumed. That’s what we’ve been preparing for these past weeks.”

I said, “Okay, but I need to go soon. How are we gonna make sure the professor isn’t already in there?”

“You leave that to me,” Reginald said.

It turned out the professor was seduced by a lady Reginald hired to seduce him. She had to seduce him a few times, I guess, to make him stay home from work.

I hope someday I’m important enough to get seduced and taken advantage of. Because then I’d be important AND I would get to have sex with someone whose entire job it was to have sex with me. I think they’d be better at it, probably. Anyone can do their own taxes, but the pros get you a better return, right?

We made our way to the toilet. It was different than the setup we’d planned for. Instead of being in an attached bathroom, it was in the hallway. There was a stall, then the toilet, just outside the lab door.

“Well, that’s weird,” I said.

“Yes,” Reginald said.

I went in the stall and turned around to close the door, but Reginald was in there with me.

I said, “Dude, they’re going to see your feet if someone comes down the hallway.”

He looked around. There wasn’t a back to the toilet to stand on. No hidden spots. Normally, if you have two in a stall, the trick is to bring in a paper bag. I learned that from my puking days. I used to do this trick at bars where I’d puke between someone’s legs while they

sat on the toilet, and I never got any puke on the other person. Gross? Sure. But. Eh, you know what? Just gross. Ignore that. That was dead-end advice.

I said, "There's only one option. You'll have to sit on my lap."

Reginald said, "Ah, no. I'll just walk down the hall and back."

I said, "Oh, yeah. I guess there was more than one option. And yours is a lot better. I'm glad you didn't listen to me. You always know the right time to not listen."

I was trying to force that teamwork conversation again, but Reginald didn't bite. Maybe because I'd already opened the trap door and was on the shitter and was farting a lot.

After he left, I waited. The professor, based on what I'd learned, didn't strain. He let the poop just fall out of him. Almost like a zen thing, like the poop isn't pushed out, it just happens to pass through the same space as your body for awhile, and then it continues on its way.

I don't know if I mentioned how in touch I was with poop at this point. I think that part of the book is probably getting taken out by the editor.

I'd become the zen master of the toilet. I'd mastered the professor's poops ages ago, and for the last couple weeks I was just messing around. I could make different shapes, you know, like one of those Play-Doh things that makes a star shape? I could do star, Jewish star. Then I did swastika. I'm not a nazi, I just wanted to see if I could, and after I did the Jewish star, I got the idea, and well, it's a swastika made out of poop, so that seems okay to do. I don't think it made my butthole racist, at least as far as I can tell.

I heard the log drop into the bowl, waited, and then a buzzer went off and a green light turned on. I got up, opened the door, and went in the office to behold the greatest treasure I'd ever lay eyes on.

Hopefully when they lay out this book there's like a big space between the end of the last section and this one. A whole page apart or something. Because now I'm going to tell you that the treasure was boring. Don't get me wrong, it was valuable. But it wasn't like a pile of gold you could swim in or vat of liquid gold you could swim in, provided you wore some kind of suit to protect you from scorching temperatures, or some other kind of setup that paired the unlikely activities of being close to a lot of money and swimming.

It was just some file cabinets and a computer. And one of those stupid coffee machines that makes that shitty instant coffee they have in offices all the time.

I heard a knock outside, and I let Reginald in. And Ace. Ace was covered in blood, and he looked really happy. I would be happy for him, just because he looked so happy, except I'm pretty sure he only looked that happy because he killed a bunch of people.

Reginald said, "This is it!" He opened one of the file cabinets, took out a folder, leafed through, and said, "Let's go."

I know, anticlimactic, right? We did all this work for a folder? A folder where I didn't even know what was inside? Doesn't it seem a little like we were cheated somehow? Aren't you all of a sudden on my side when I tell you that I opened the other file cabinet to take some files of my own? And since you're on my side, doesn't it make you less made at me that an alarm went off?

"You cretin!" Reginald said.

Ace pulled out a long knife. I was almost positive it was a Lord of the Rings movie prop, but I didn't say anything. Ace said, "Can I kill him now?"

"Please," Reginald said.

Ace walked closer to me. I opened the folder and started throwing stuff at him. The only thing in there I recognized was an instruction manual for the shitty coffee maker. Who keeps that? It's not that hard. I thought this guy was a scientist or something.

Then, the door busted down, straight off the hinges, Reginald was squashed underneath. Ace turned and started stabbing the people who ran through the door. There were a lot of them, and he did a pretty good job, although to be honest, I thought he'd be better at knife stuff. He flailed around a lot. I think it just worked because, you know, he's fucking crazy, so most people are probably thrown off by a crazy guy covered in knives.

I put my hands up and told them they didn't have to tackle me. I didn't have knives or anything to fight with. They must've believed me because they just pepper sprayed me and took me and threw me in a cell.

The government building had a jail inside. Like a classy stadium. Or maybe a very not classy stadium.

Ace was in the cell next to mine, sitting on his toilet. Which I could totally see. Why have the toilets facing each other like that? Seems crazy.

"Wow, that was some heist, huh?" I said.

Ace didn't answer. Not in words, but he glared at me. Wait, no, he was staring daggers. That's way better for a knife guy.

"Do you have an escape plan?" I said.

"Yeah," he said. "I hid a knife up my..." and then he grunted hard.

"Ace," I said, "Based on what's happening and everything that's happened in this story so far [wink!], I think you're telling me you put a knife in your ass."

Ace fell off the toilet, and I could see specks of blood on the seat.

This was a moment. The kind of moment where I could've been bitter and let Ace die trying to poop out a knife. But that would make me the bad guy in the story. And I'm not the bad guy in this story. Am I coming off as the bad guy?

I said, "Just admit you need my help! This is the one time I can be useful to you! We can do this together."

I stretched my hand out through the bars, into his cell, and Ace crawled across the floor.

He didn't look so good. He was very pale. And he had no pants on and blood coming from his butt. Those were the main things that made him not look good. His hair was a little greasy, too, but when there's butt blood, greasy hair doesn't mean a lot, right?

I grabbed Ace's hand, and I said, "Okay, listen to me. You have to forget about shitting out a knife. I mean, that's what's happening, but forget about that."

Ace screamed a little.

"Just think about the knife already through your butt. That's where it'll be, outside your butt. Just think about that, focus on that image."

Ace gagged a little. Which made sense. It's a gross image, a knife coming out of your butt.

Ace squeezed my hand, and I saw the tip of what looked like a knife.

"You're doing it, buddy!" I said.

The knife burst out of his butt. With also a lot of blood and poop and cords and stuff. I don't know what inside a human body looks like, but from what little I've seen, it's disgusting. I couldn't even sleep with a woman for months after this because I couldn't stand the idea of my penis being that close to all those guts. Then I couldn't sleep with a woman for several months after that because nobody would sleep with me. But the first months of that dry spell, that was

all about me not wanting to sleep with anyone, and only the second half...maybe the last third or so was about them not wanting to sleep with me.

Ace was dead. No doubt about it. When all the stuff that's usually inside goes to the outside, that's never a good thing. There's no such thing as a guy who turned inside-out and was pretty much fine other than that.

And unless I wanted to share his fate, I needed to get out of there.

Well, and also I needed to not put a knife in my butt, which I wasn't planning to do. But you get the idea.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

At this point, the narrator claims that by connecting to the zen lords of shitting, he found he could create, by his anus, a key that fit the lock to his cell.

According to the police reports, the government agency immediately contacted emergency services when they found "Ace" dead in his cell, and when the police arrived, they took the narrator into custody as well. "We're not some insane company from The Running Man or something," one worker is quoted as saying. "We were just going to hang onto them until the police got there."

The narrator was eventually let go. It's unclear whether this is because of his ramblings about the zen mastery of shit or if they just figured he was incapable of masterminding anything like this, but he lucked into a pretty good public defender who argued that all he did was crap in a toilet out of confusion and desperation, and after extensive interviews, this seemed not only plausible, but more likely than anyone involving him in a delicate heist.

Can he shit out keys to locks? These are the questions that will ring throughout time and multiple pressings of this book.

You're probably wondering what else is left to say?

Well, I wanted to do that part where you say what happened to everyone.

Ace is dead. Duh. I just told you all about how he tried to shit out a knife. I think he might've made it if he listened to me, but he was too proud. Ultimately, that pride was his undoing. That and the knife in his ass.

The tech guy disappeared. Tech guys are smart. That's why they're out in a van like ten blocks away. When everyone gets in trouble, they turn off all the shit and drive away, and then they make an app that helps you hook up with people who lost their limbs or with farmers or with people who don't like birthday cake very much, and they make a bajillion dollars through old-fashioned work. Not much work, it takes them like 5 minutes. And I guess it's not old-fashioned because they just type some stuff on a computer and somehow a dating app comes out of the computer. I don't know how it works.

The old man was already dead. I told you that. I don't think I told you he also died shitting out a knife. Nobody knows how that happened. I thought about telling you that earlier because it might be foreshadowing, but it seems like just a big coincidence, so I left it out until now.

The woman who seduced the professor went on to seduce a Nobel prize winner. I guess someone heard that inside that Nobel medal there was some hidden key to a cave that had a bunch of secret shit in it. This turned out to not be true, but seducing a Nobel prize winner was a big "get" for the seducer lady. Eventually she was tasked with seducing some guy who invented a dating app, which turned out to be our same tech guy, and they recognized each other. Boy did they have a big laugh! Then I think his security team beat her to death and the tech guy kept her skeleton on display in his house. Small world.

Reginald disappeared. I immediately told the people at the company everything, and they went back to look for Reginald under the door, but he was gone. Or maybe he was also dead and they didn't want to deal with that, so they disappeared him.

The big secret we stole? I have no fucking idea. But I'll tell you, after doing a few more jobs like this, it's never anything cool. No space lasers, no nukeular bombs or whatever. It's always just some computer program that fucks around with like .1% of the stock market or something, or like a boner pill recipe.

Me? Well, I'm retired now. I found that pooping professionally made it less fun. It wasn't about the pooping anymore. You know that great feeling you get when you wake up and take a nice dump? How you just feel light and free? I didn't feel that anymore, and it broke my heart. So I retired from the game, and all the pooping I do now, I do it for me.

I've sold a couple sculptures that I shat out. Because people who are into modern art are idiots. Seriously, if you want proof that money doesn't make you smart, do an "opening" at a gallery. You show up with a bunch of poop sculptures you LITERALLY CRAPPED OUT and everyone gets all excited and gives you money.

Hopefully you'll still have some questions. All of which will be answered in my next book. It's more of a how-to. I want to call it Doo-Doo How-To, but my editor doesn't like that. I asked if he noticed that it rhymes, and I haven't heard back. In that book, you'll learn how to be a zen master of shit. Just like me. A real spinner of shit. Someone who can make something out of shit. Like, imagine a guy sat down and wrote out this whole story, just took his lunch breaks at work and wrote a really stupid story about shit. That's kind of what I do, but with actual shit. It would be really poetic if that analogy was real, if someone wrote out a whole fictional book centered around shit.

Hey, ANALogy. Maybe that's the title.